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INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 000568

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/02/2018
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SUBJECT: FATAH ELECTS JERUSALEM COMMITTEE

REF: JERUSALEM 454

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. On March 30, the Fatah Central Committee's (FCC) Mobilization and Discipline (MAD) Committee succeeded in its second attempt to organize a meeting of 921 Fatah members from East Jerusalem and 26 surrounding villages to elect 23 Jerusalem regional committee members. Nearly all of the 23 elected to the committee are affiliated with the security forces. According to Amin al-Khatib, a former PSO officer newly elected to the regional committee, the 23 members will meet on April 1 or 2 to select a Secretary General. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On March 30, the Fatah Central Committee's (FCC) Mobilization and Discipline (MAD) Committee succeeded in its second attempt to organize a meeting of 921 Fatah members from East Jerusalem and 26 surrounding villages to elect the Jerusalem regional committee. Unlike the March 8 meeting which ended in a fist fight and postponement of elections (reftel), Jerusalem Fatah members elected 23 regional committee members March 30. FCC member and MAD commissioner Ahmad Qureia (Abu Ala'a) presided over the event.

¶3. (C) Fatah member Muhammad Shamasneh told ConGen Political Specialist that there were intense consultations in advance of the meeting between two rival groups: General Intelligence (GI) members who supported grassroots Fatah leader Hamadi al-Rajabi, and PA Preventive Security Organization (PSO) officers, with Abu Ala'a's support, who supported Abd al-Qader al-Khatib, head of the MAD Prisoners Committee and former security guard for Faisal al-Husseini. Shamasneh said a compromise was reached between Abu Ala'a and GI Chief Tawfiq Tirawi: neither al-Rajabi nor al-Khatib would run for election and both would accept the results regardless of the winner. According to Shamasneh, Abu Ala'a convinced Tirawi and al-Rajabi that elections could not move forward without such a compromise. (Note: Tension is high between PSO and GI forces due to plans to merge the two. Although unification has not been approved, discussions are underway at the highest levels. According to Shamasneh, Tirawi and al-Rajabi believed they had no choice but to accept Abu Ala'a's deal on elections. End Note)

¶4. (C) Shamasneh said that 18 of the 23 regional committee members who were elected March 30 have close PSO ties, three have ties to the GI, and two are neutral. He commented that PSO-affiliated candidates took the most seats in the elections, because Fatah members in the Jerusalem region traditionally have more ties to the PSO than the GI. The newly-elected committee members draw neither from the younger generation, grassroots Fatah members nor the Old Guard; instead most are mid-level Fatah members with ties to the PSO and Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC) member Jibril Rajoub. PSO-affiliated regional committee members include Omar

Shalabi, Amin al-Khatib, Said Yaqin, Talal al-Sayyad, Raed al-Fayez, Mutasim al-Tayem, Mamoun al-Abbasi, Ahmad al-Ayan, Salem Abu Dahooq, Odeh al-Khatib, Nasar Jafar, Muhammad Matar, Kifah al-Radaydeh, Rania Arafat, Rima Shahin, Fayhaa Abu Gharbiya, and Nabil al-Jamal.

¶5. (C) According to Amin al-Khatib, a former PSO officer who is a newly elected regional committee member, the 23 elected members will meet on April 1 or 2 to select a new Secretary General for the Jerusalem committee. Al-Khatib expects that either PSO-affiliated Said Yaqin or Omar Shalabi will be selected as SecGen.

WALLES